

Research Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

California Dept. of Fish and Game Conference Room
20 Lower Ragsdale Rd.,
Monterey Calif.
May 20, 1994 - 0830 to 1245 hrs

Minutes taken and transcribed by:

Aaron King, Monterey Bay NMS - RAC Executive Coordinator

Member Attendees

Greg Cailliet, Moss Landing Marine Labs - RAC Chairman
Andrew DeVogelaere, ESNERR and Foundation
Laura Ehret, Naval Postgraduate School
Steve Eittreim - USGS
Chris Harrold, Monterey Bay Aquarium
Jim Harvey, Moss Landing Marine Labs
Terry Jackson, Manager, Monterey Bay NMS
Deborah Johnston, CA Dept of Fish and Game / Monterey
Jan Roletto, GFNMS
Gary Sharp, CIRIOS
Mary Yoklavich, NOAA/NMFS/PFEG

- Members Not Able to Attend:

Jim Rote, NOAA/OCRM
Bill Schramm, OAR
Dennis Powers, Hopkins Marine Station
Bruce Robison, MBARI
Rick Starr, Univ. of CA, Sea Grant Advisory Program

- Meeting Member Substitutions:

Dan Costa for Don Potts of UCSC
Gary Ichikawa for Mark Stephenson of CDFG/Marine Pollution Studies Lab

- Guest Attendees:

Helen Golde - SRD, NOAA
Dawn Goley - UCSC
Jo Guerrero - MLML
Donna Meyers - AMBAG
Liz Moore - SRD, NOAA
Holly Price - CMC
Rachel Saunders - CMC
Karin Strasser Kauffman - SA

Greg Cailliet, RAC Chair, introduced the meeting.

Quick discussion items:

Introductions - Introductions were made around the table and RAC membership substitutions announced.

Minutes - The April 22, 1994 meeting minutes were unanimously approved. However, due to the delay in getting the minutes out, the Chair is allowing members to comment on the minutes until the next meeting.

Department of the Interior and Morro Bay Foundation membership on the RAC (King) - Cliff Hoskins will be the DOI representative and Karen Wooster will be the Morro Bay Foundation representative (Steve Muller will be her alternate). Aaron will try and get CV's on these two folks to send around to the RAC. Gary Sharp and Les Strnad then gave a short synopsis on the Morro Bay Foundation.

Site Characterization RFP (Golde) - Helen described some of the last minute changes that were made to the RFP, including the required use of an application package (available from Aaron).

Since SRD has to make a decision within 60 days from the receipt of the proposals (due to budgetary deadlines), if the RAC would like to add its input to this process they will need to act quickly. A subcommittee was formed to review the proposals submitted, made up of Mary Yoklavich (Chair), Chris Harrold, Frank Schwing (tentitive), and Steve Eittreim.

Research Permit Subcommittee Report (Strnad/Golde) - A meeting of the Subcommittee was held and now a revised guideline document was presented by Helen for institutional permits. MLML has offered to be the institution for the pilot study. Helen described projects that would be seen as appropriate for coverage under the institutional permits, and what would not be appropriate. Helen asked for comments and suggestions by June 13 so she can have another draft ready for the RAC by its next meeting. A general discussion ensued on the need for institutional permits. The Chair encouraged the Subcommittee to meet again on the newly revised guidelines and for other members of the RAC to pass the document around their respective institutions and submit their comments to Les Strnad. The Chair also stated his intention to have this matter on the Agenda for the next meeting as a major discussion item. The Chair complimented the Subcommittee on its work to date.

Report on the SAC meeting (Cailliet) - Greg introduced Karen Strasser Kauffman (Chair of the SAC) and gave a summary of the activity that took place at the last SAC meeting, including major discussion items (ATOC, Jade Cove, Watsonville Wastewater treatment facility, etc.). Greg discussed how the SAC recognized the three subcommittees as official, yet informal, working groups of the SAC. More formality of the RAC's standing would require more complications caused by Federal laws and regulations. Greg described the RAC's work as being two-fold: 1) to give the SAC advice on issues they refer to the RAC, and 2) to bring forward to the SAC, and offer advice on, issues they believe are important from a research point of view. Greg announced that the SAC had passed a resolution that they encourage NOAA to investigate an administrative alternative to the Jade Cove impasse, such as allowing the use of hand tools only for Jade extraction. Finally, Greg stated that he had again stated the RAC's insistence that a full-time Research Coordinator be hired ASAP.

Jade Cove (Eittreim) - (The Chair decided, since the RAC had started discussing this item, to move it from the Discussion Items part of the Agenda and discuss it here.) Steve passed out and discussed a report prepared for the RAC by Gretchen Luepke of the USGS (see handout). Discussion was generated from the handout on the size of the deposit and the possibility of small-scale extraction being capable of depleting this deposit. At the request of the Chair, Steve stated that he would ask Gretchen to make a presentation to the SAC at their meeting on June 27.

Permit Report (King) - Aaron passed out and discussed a permit report to the RAC (see handout). The report has been updated with suggestions made at the last RAC meeting. He stated that he had two preliminary requests that had not been entered into the database, one was to remove an anchor off Cannery Row, and the other was for a marine geological experiment by Dave Cacchione of the USGS. He also pointed out that Dave's preliminary permit request is attached since Dave wanted any input the RAC could give to his project. Mary Yoklavich, Jan Roletto, and Steve Eittreim would look over Dave's project and submit comments to the Sanctuary staff.

EcoNet Update (King) - The conference is up and running. The name of the conference is "mbnms.rac". Many of the items we have been discussing have related items placed on it already. Aaron stated that at the present time only RAC members were being allowed "write" access to the Conference, but that the general public could read the notices if they had an EcoNet account. The RAC decided to keep the access privileges like this for the time being.

BREAK

DISCUSSION ITEMS

ATOC -

(This matter took up the rest of the meeting. These notes attempt to touch on the major topics of that discussion.)

The Chair opened this discussion, pointing out that the RAC ATOC Subcommittee had produced a written summary of the ATOC issue to be reported on here.

Jim Harvey pointed out that the Subcommittee's report is now outdated due to ATOC's recent change of plans and that he has recently become involved with certain research aspects of ATOC. Jim described ATOC's recent decision to delay ATOC climate Change experiments for at least five or six months so the marine mammalogists could generate some baseline data on the transmitter's effect using low frequency sound. This will help determine whether or not the project will have any significant marine mammal effects before the ATOC project could proceed.

Jim stated that the subcommittee agreed that there was a lack of available data on effects. Therefore, a modified research protocol should be allowed to proceed. The subcommittee believes that a modified six month protocol would not pose any significant threats to the Sanctuary's resources, and that enough safeguards would exist to halt the modified six month project should any damage be found to occur. Jim then gave a more detailed description of how the marine mammalogists would have transmitter days on and days off periods to create replication over time.

Jim summarized three points that the RAC should be concerned with in regard to this project:

1 - Should this project be located within the Sanctuary?

2 - How does the RAC deal with the fact that the project is now split between work on mammals and work on global climate change?

3 - When should the RAC come up with a decision? It should be remembered here that the best time to do marine mammal research at that site is nearly upon us, and that if we wait until winter, most of the marine mammals in this year will be gone from that area.

A discussion then followed regarding the permits that might be required before even this modified protocol could go into effect. The participants discussed the possibility of an EA being done to get a marine mammal permit for this revised six month protocol, with the understanding that this is done to gather data for the long-term EIS. The possibility of this route being successful assumes no lawsuits are filed to stop this research.

Dan Costa indicated that ATOC is looking for input in how they could remove any reasonable reservations about the project. Dan also gave a brief overview of how SERDP and ARPA came about through Congressional mandate. He then described the three descriptive techniques they would use: 1) aerial and boat surveys to assess abundance and distribution; 2) observations to detect behavioral changes; and 3) listening to acoustical information through the receiver arrays. He then discussed, species by species, how the researchers would get this information.

Holly Price, who had to leave for another commitment, read a pre-prepared statement for the record (see handout).

Terry Jackson stated that the Sanctuary program considered the EIS a key element, since the Sanctuary program is interested in ATOC's potential effects on other organisms in addition to marine mammals.

Dan Costa expressed his concern that the ATOC program needs to be given a clear signal, either do whatever is necessary to proceed off of Pt. Sur, or leave the Sanctuary altogether. He encouraged the RAC to help give the ATOC program this clear signal.

Greg Cailliet stated that he believed that the RAC should encourage research on Sanctuary resources, including acoustical research. This pre-ATOC marine mammal research protocol accomplishes this task, and should be encouraged by the RAC. He stated that the RAC should try to help ATOC put together a good package through advice and review of the eventual proposal to NMFS.

There was general discussion about the RAC's position and what to do next. The RAC passed a resolution supporting a pre-climatic change research program assessing the impact of the acoustical sound source on mammals. A lot of time was spent going over the exact wording of this resolution. The final wording of the resolution was as follows:

-The Acoustic Thermometry of Ocean Climate (ATOC) project has recently changed its scope of study by first emphasizing marine mammal research and agreeing to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) before initiating their studies on ocean temperature. This is because the currently available information is apparently insufficient to evaluate the potential impact of low frequency sounds on marine mammals and other organisms. The Research Advisory Committee (RAC) supports a rigorous marine mammal research program prior to acoustic climatic research.

-We encourage acoustic research in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary that will optimize the operation of the ATOC sound source, thereby enhancing studies to determine the effects of these sounds on marine mammals.

We propose that information from such studies will be useful in the EIS process.

We further recommend that the RAC be an integral part of the review process for the new marine mammal acoustic study proposal, the results of this study (if approved), and the resultant EIS. We will then be better able to make recommendations to the Sanctuary Advisory Council regarding future ATOC experiment proposals.

Resolution passed unanimously with one abstention by Dan Costa.

A discussion on the RAC's ATOC subcommittee composition resulted in Deborah Johnston being designated as the new Chair, with Jim Harvey acting in the capacity of non-voting advisor, and with Rick Starr (if agreed to by him) being added as a member. It was also decided that any documents the RAC produces on the ATOC issue would be kept internal unless otherwise released.

The Chair thanked the ATOC subcommittee for its hard work on this matter.

Role of the RAC to the SAC - Put off until next meeting.

Research Projects for next year's Budget - It was announced that Terry Jackson would be seeking a research budget of \$200,000, and the RAC should decide how it will recommend that money should be spent. Greg suggested that the RAC consider this and discuss it at the next meeting of the RAC. Aaron King, Don Potts and Andrew DeVogelaere would collate everyone's input and suggestions, and lead the discussion on this at the next meeting.

Future RAC Meetings - Since there is conflict between the schedules of the RAC and the SAC, it was decided to schedule future RAC meetings on the third Friday of each month, instead of the fourth. The next three months' meetings would be the 17th of June, 15th of July, and the 19th of August.

1245 hrs - Meeting adjourned by the Chair.